

## ABSTRACT

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**F. F. MERING (1822–1887) – PROFESSOR OF STATE MEDICAL SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. VLADIMIR**

**Introduction.** Fedir Fedorovych (Georg-Friedrich Friedrichovych) Mering was one of the leading specialists in internal medicine in the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century. However, his scientific career started not at the Therapeutic Department, but at the Department of State Medical Science. Our analysis of the literature showed that not all stages of F. F. Mering's life were equally well explored. The **objective** of this article, first of all, was to focus on the coverage of this period in the biography of a prominent Kyivan professor-therapist of the second half of the 19th century. To do this, we will use new historical sources: published and archival ones (such as the curriculum vitae of F. F. Mering).

**Results.** From September 1/13, 1853, F. F. Mering as an adjunct headed the Department of State Medical Science at the University of St. Vladimir, and from November 4/16, 1854 till December 13/25, 1857, he worked as an extraordinary professor at this department. At the Department of State Medical Science, F. F. Mering lectured on the following subjects: 1) forensic medicine; 2) medical police; 3) hygiene; and 4) the doctrine of epizootic diseases. At the same time, Prof. Mering started lecturing on the history of medicine (since 1854). In addition, from May 31/June 12, 1855, he was in charge of the therapeutic hospital clinic at the Kyiv Military Hospital; in connection with this, on January 29/February 10, 1856, he was appointed junior intern at this hospital. In connection with the relocation of Prof. Mering to the Department of Special Pathology and Therapy in 1857, F. F. Erhardt took the place of an adjunct, and since 1859, the latter was the last extraordinary professor at the department. During these years and until the end of the 1860–61 academic year, Prof. Mering continued lecturing on medical police and hygiene, and F. F. Erhardt gave lectures on forensic medicine.

**Keywords:** F. F. Mering, the University of St. Vladimir, Department of Medical Science.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

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ПРОФЕСОР ДЕРЖАВНОГО ЛІКАРОЗНАВСТВА  
УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ СВЯТОГО ВОЛОДИМИРА Ф. Ф. МЕРІНГ  
(1822–1887)

Федір Федорович (Георг-Фрідріх Фрідріхович) Мерінг – один із найбільших фахівців із внутрішніх хвороб у Російській імперії другої половини XIX ст. Водночас його наукова кар'єра розпочалася не на терапевтичній кафедрі, а на кафедрі державного лікарського знання. Наведений нами аналіз літератури показав, що не всі етапи життєвого шляху Ф. Ф. Мерінга досліджено рівнозначно. У зв'язку з цим **мета даної роботи** насамперед сконцентруватися на висвітленні даного періоду біографії видатного київського професора-терапевта другої половини XIX ст. Для цього були залучені нові історичні джерела – передусім опубліковані, і навіть архівні (послужний список Ф. Ф. Мерінга).

**Результати.** З 1/13 вересня 1853 р. Ф. Ф. Мерінг очолив кафедру державного лікарознавства в Університеті Св. Володимира у званні ад'юнкту, а з 4/16 листопада 1854 р. по 13/25 грудня 1857 р. він працював екстраординарним професором цієї кафедри.

На кафедрі державного лікарознавства Ф. Ф. Мерінг викладав предмети цієї кафедри: 1) судову медицину; 2) медичну поліцію; 3) гігієну; та 4) вчення про епізоотичні хвороби. Водночас проф. Мерінг почав читати курс історії медицини (з 1854 р.). Крім того, з 31 травня /12 червня 1855 р. він завідував терапевтичною госпітальною клінікою у Київському військовому шпиталі; у зв'язку з чим 29 січня /10 лютого 1856 р. його було призначено молодшим ординатором у цей шпиталь. У зв'язку з переходом 1857 р. проф. Мерінга на кафедру приватної патології та терапії, у тому ж 1857 році ад'юнктом по кафедрі державного лікарознавства став Ф. Ф. Ергардт (з 1859 р. він – останній екстраординарний професор цієї кафедри). У ці роки й до кінця 1860/61 навчального року проф. Мерінг продовжував читати медичну поліцію та гігієну, а Ф. Ф. Ергардт викладав судову медицину.

**Ключові слова:** Ф. Ф. Мерінг, Університет Святого Володимира, кафедра лікарознавства.

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## INTRODUCTION/ВСТУП

Professor Fedir Fedorovych (Georg-Friedrich Friedrichovych) Mering went down in the history of medicine as one of the leading specialists in internal medicine in the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century. He was second to none in Ukraine. However, his scientific career started not at the therapeutic department, but at the Department of State Medical Science.

His first biography was published during his lifetime [1]. Then an obituary written by his student, professor-therapist Tritshel [2], was published after Mering's death and a biographical note appeared in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary [3]. In the Soviet era, only one article [4] and biographical notes in two editions of the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia [5, 6] were published.

In modern Ukraine, interest has been revived to Prof. F. F. Mering. For instance, his biography was published in the repeatedly reprinted biographical dictionary of the Bogomolets National Medical University [7–11]. It was not indicated in these publications that F. F. Mering was a professor at the Department of State Medical Science. Neither was it in the article written by Peleshchuk et al. [12], which largely duplicated their own article from the Soviet era [4].

In the noughties, a monographic study about F. F. Mering [13] was published; the authors for the first time used a number of new historical sources for the biography of the personality. Undoubtedly, this book became an important milestone in the study of the life and work of Prof. Mering. At the same time, the authors did not figure out what the Department of State Medical Science had been like. Dzeman [14] followed the mentioned book, in particular, when presenting the activities of F. F. Mering at the Department of State Medical Science.

The next important step in the study of Mering's biography was a Ph.D. thesis research in Historical Sciences by V. O. Mering [15]. This author, who also published papers under the name of Koziy, did not have higher medical education and, therefore, devoted his work to the role of the Mering family in the educational and social life of Ukraine in the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries rather than to field-specific aspects of Prof. Mering's work.

In Russia, a historian of internal diseases Borodulin [16] published a paper, which focused on Mering as a therapist, while an article by Kazakevich et al. [17] was of a compilation nature, duplicating the inaccuracies and mistakes of previous authors.

The above review of the literature shows that not all stages of F. F. Mering's life were equally well explored and left gaps in his biography. So the fact that he was a professor of state medical science before moving to the therapeutic department was either not indicated in the literature, or stated inconsistently. In this regard, the purpose of this article, first of all, was to focus on the coverage of this period in the biography of a prominent Kievan professor-therapist of the second half of the 19th century. To do this, we will use new historical sources: published and archival ones. The latter is represented by the curriculum vitae of F. F. Mering, which has not

been sufficiently studied so far [State Archive of Kyiv. F. 16. Op. 465. D. 4762. LL.291-309].

**Materials and methods:** archival and published historical sources; the historical method was used.

**Results.** Georg-Friedrich Mering was born on February 26/March 10, 1822, in a Lutheran family (for convenience, hereinafter we will provide dates according to both the Julian and Gregorian calendars.) He was born in the city of Don in the Kingdom of Saxony (now it is the state of Saxony, Germany). In 1845, he graduated from the University of Leipzig upon the defense of a doctoral thesis in Medicine and Surgery; thereafter, he moved to the Russian Empire.

Having affirmed his foreign diploma at the University of St. Vladimir, F. F. Mering began to make practice in the Poltava province. Then he went to St. Petersburg, where he began to prepare for the doctoral exam. Here he got acquainted with N. I. Pirogov, and in 1851, he passed the exam for the degree of Doctor of Medicine and defended his Leipzig thesis at the University of Dorpat (now the University of Tartu, Estonia), which paved the way for his academic career.

N. I. Pirogov invited him to compete for the post of adjunct at the Department of Special Pathology and Therapy of Kyiv University, but another applicant won the contest. However, in 1853, the Department of State Medical Science was vacant, after the resignation of Prof. I. F. Leonov [18]. F. F. Mering was offered to deliver the departmental subjects as an adjunct, and he agreed (in accordance with the University Charter of 1863, adjuncts after 10 years took the rank of associate professors). Before moving to Kyiv from the Chernihiv province, where he made practice at that time, F. F. Mering took Russian citizenship on June 30/July 12, 1853.

Thus, from September 1/13, 1853, he worked as an adjunct at the Department of State Medical Science. The following year (since November 4/16, 1854) he took the rank of an extraordinary professor at this department.

In the 1853–1854 academic year, adjunct Mering delivered forensic medicine for students of the medical faculty, and hygiene for students of the medical and law faculties [19]. In the next semester, he lectured on medical police to medical students, and on forensic medicine to the students of both medical and law faculties [20]. Later Prof. Mering delivered lectures on the same disciplines at the Department of State Medical Science, but

for some years, he also lectured on the doctrine of epizootic diseases for medical students [21].

When F. F. Mering came to work at the Department of State Medical Science in 1853, professor A. I. Slobodzynskyi had been already lecturing there as an associate professor (1822–1869). Here we should give the following clarification: later, in accordance with the University Charter of 1863, associate professors ("docents") were renamed into "private-docents" and, therefore, the then-adjuncts were higher on the executive ladder than the then-associate professors. Thus, initially, F. F. Mering had an assistant who delivered lectures on a part of the departmental subjects, but on December 20, 1855/January 1, 1856, he resigned "due to poor health", so later Prof. Mering worked at the Department of State Medical Science alone.

According to the University Charter of 1842, the Department of State Medical Science did not include the history of medicine, but for some additional fee, F. F. Mering started lecturing on this course since the first half of the 1854–1855 academic year. In addition, he was entrusted with a hospital therapeutic clinic (since May 31/June 12, 1855), which did not belong to the Department of State Medical Science, but was previously administered by a professor of special pathology and therapy. Due to the fact that Prof. Mering became the head of the clinic located at the Kyiv Military Hospital, he was assigned as a junior intern at this hospital (from January 29/February 10, 1856).

During the cholera outbreak raging in Kyiv in 1855, the medical faculty was invited to assist the provincial committee of public health. To manage the two established cholera hospitals, university professors V. V. Becker (1811–1874) and F. F. Mering were assigned, and seven students were seconded to help them. It was stated in the university report that Prof. Becker and Prof. Mering, while managing the said hospitals, "set an example of exceptional selflessness, diligence, and love for the afflicted," and the students mentioned tried to imitate their mentors [22].

In addition, Prof. F. F. Mering and Prof. S. P. Alferiev (1816–1884) were sent to the locations of the Southern Army in March 1856, according to the Highest Command Order, to fight against epidemic typhus. By this time, hostilities on the fronts of the Crimean War had ceased, and on March 18(30), 1856, the Treaty of Paris was signed, but the typhus epidemic continued in the

troops. They returned from this trip on June 20/July 2, 1856.

Both professors spent six weeks in military temporary hospitals in Odessa, where they were engaged in practical duties (support for those who fell ill with "typhoid diseases"), as well as observing and studying the disease. After that, for further observations on typhus in other places, professors Alferiev and Mering traveled to Mykolaiv, Kherson, Perekop, Simferopol, and Bakhchisaray, visited the allied camp in the Crimea (the occupying troops were still on the peninsula), Balaklava and Kamysh; and, finally, with the Highest Permission, they were sent to study the properties and characteristics of "typhoid fever" in Constantinople (the then-called Istanbul), where they had the opportunity to survey Turkish hospitals, as well as temporary military French, English and Sardinian hospitals. Both Prof. Alferiev and Prof. Mering during this trip were elected as corresponding members of the Turkish Medical Society in Constantinople [23].

Not until 1857 the Department of Special Pathology and Therapy became vacant. On December 13/25, 1857, F. F. Mehring was redirected as an extraordinary professor to the named department (since 1858, he became an ordinary professor), and in 1865, according to the election, he was relocated to the Department of the Departmental Therapeutic Clinic, which he headed until his death. When Prof. Mering left the Department of State Medical Science in 1857, F. F. Erhardt (1828–1895) took the place of an adjunct, and since 1859 he was the last extraordinary professor of state medical science. However, all these years and until the end of the 1860–1861 academic year, Erhardt delivered only forensic medicine, while Prof. Mering gave lectures on therapy, as well as medical police and hygiene [24].

There is evidence of Prof. Mering as an excellent lecturer on hygiene and forensic medicine. Prof. Tritschel wrote: "How interesting and popular his lectures on hygiene were among students, we can learn from his former students who report that his classroom was always crowded not only with students of the medical faculty, but also of other faculties: he knew how to spark the interest of his students in a lively and completely scientific presentation of this young science" [2]. Prof. Romanovich–Slavatinsky stated: "He read forensic medicine to us when he was still an

adjunct. <...> Despite his Leipzig Russian language, he delivered forensic medicine to us so interestingly that we attended lectures at the anatomical theater with pleasure” [25].

It only remains for us to briefly conclude the biography of Prof. Mering. In 1878, he became an honored ordinary professor due to the fact that he had served out 25 years in the academic domain, and on January 4/16, 1887, he was awarded a title of an honorary member of the University of St. Vladimir. Ranks: Court Councillor (1857), Collegiate Councillor (1861), State Councillor (1869), State Councillor (1871), Privy Councillor (1881). Orders of St. Anna, 3rd class (1856); St. Vladimir, 4th class (1859); St. Stanislaus, 2nd class (1862); St. Anna, 2nd class (1865); St. Vladimir, 3rd class (1867); St. Stanislaus, 1st class (1874); St. Anna, 1st class (1883); St. Vladimir, 2nd class (1887). In addition, he was

awarded a dark bronze medal on the St. Andrew suspension ribbon in commemoration of the Crimean war of 1853–1856. Thus, F. F. Mering obtained aristocracy both by order (Order of St. Vladimir, 4th class) and by rank (Active State Councillor).

Prof. Mering was married (since 1859) to Katerina M. Mering (1841–?) – the daughter of nobleman M. M. Tomara and A. M. Tomara, nee Ivanenko. Mering's children: Sophia (23.04/5.05.1860 – ?; the married name – Countess Konovnitsyna), Mykhailo (8/20.02.1862 – ?); Nadiya (8/20.11.1864 – ?; married name Telepnieva); Sergiy (23.08/4.09.1867–1926) and Volodymyr (1869 – ?). The wife and children were of the Orthodox faith.

Fedir Mering died on October 19/31, 1887, in Kyiv and was buried in the Askold's grave cemetery, which has not survived.

## CONCLUSIONS/ВИСНОВКИ

1) Since September 1/13, 1853, F. F. Mering as an adjunct headed the Department of State Medical Science at the University of St. Vladimir, and from November 4/16, 1854 till December 13/25, 1857, he worked as an extraordinary professor at this department.

2) At the Department of State Medical Science, F. F. Mering lectured on the following subjects: 1) forensic medicine; 2) medical police; 3) hygiene; and 4) the doctrine of epizootic diseases.

3) At the same time, Prof. Mering started lecturing on the history of medicine (since 1854). In addition, from May 31/June 12, 1855, he was in charge

of the therapeutic hospital clinic at the Kyiv Military Hospital; in connection with this, on January 29/February 10, 1856, he was appointed junior intern at this hospital.

4) In connection with the relocation of Prof. Mering to the Department of Special Pathology and Therapy in 1857, F. F. Erhardt took the place of an adjunct, and since 1859, the latter was the last extraordinary professor at the department. During these years and until the end of the 1860–61 academic year, Prof. Mering continued lecturing on medical police and hygiene, and F. F. Erhardt gave lectures on forensic medicine.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST/КОНФЛІКТ ІНТЕРЕСІВ

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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None.

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